

## Dental health should be part of plan for seniors, dentists say

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As Medicare's Dec. 7 deadline for enrollment approaches, local dentists hope people will make plans for caring for their oral health.

Dr. Todd Oyama of Medical Center Dental in Pendleton said while people tend to think of dental care as separate from other medical care, oral health has impacts beyond the mouth, and has been linked to systemic diseases, such as heart disease.

"It's all the same body," he said.

Oyama and Dr. Jason Walker, also of Medical Center Dental, said older patients can be at increased risk for dental problems, for a number of reasons. Patients' gums can begin to recede, leaving them more vulnerable to decay of the tooth's root, known as root caries. As people age, their taste buds tend to become less sensitive, spurring them to favor richer, sweeter foods that are harder on teeth. And many medications for older adults cause dry mouth, which speeds tooth decay.

Walker said he often sees patients who come in regularly for cleanings while their employer paid for their dental insurance, but after they retired decided that since they haven't had any significant issues with their teeth in the past, they can skip paying for cleanings and checkups.

"All of a sudden, they'll

come in and say, 'This is hurting,' and they'll already have quite a bit of decay," he said.

He suggested that if they are able, retirees should continue to come in twice a year for a cleaning to address the hard plaque buildup that home care won't take care of, and to catch major problems before it's too late to save a tooth or multiple teeth.

"Dentures are better than nothing, but our own teeth are ideal," he said.

Oyama said good home care is also important for people of all ages, including regular brushing and flossing, fluoride mouthwash and a healthy diet.

Open enrollment for Medicare runs to Dec. 7. People can sign up for the first time, or shop for coverage that better fits their current needs. Eastern Oregon residents have new options available this year through Summit Health, a partnership between several Eastern Oregon hospitals that is providing Medicare Advantage plans.

Oregon residents can visit [healthcare.oregon.gov/shiba/Pages/index.aspx](http://healthcare.oregon.gov/shiba/Pages/index.aspx), call 1-800-722-4134 (toll-free), or email [shiba.oregon@oregon.gov](mailto:shiba.oregon@oregon.gov) to find answers to questions or the nearest Oregon Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance volunteers who can help them enroll or change their plan before Dec. 7. Hermiston-area residents can also call Good Shepherd Health Care System directly at 541-667-3509 to schedule assistance.

## Hermiston Warming Station needs volunteers

Volunteers must attend training, pass background check and be at least 18 years old

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
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HERMISTON — The Hermiston Warming Station is in desperate need of more volunteers, according to board members.

Sandy Francis, the warming station's new board chair, said so far only 31 people have signed up to be volunteers. That's not enough to staff the station all through the night, although they have committed to at least opening from 7-10 p.m. each night so people can come in and get warmed up and have a cup of soup.

"We may have to turn them out at 10 (p.m.), unfortunately," Francis said.

The warming station posted a plea for more volunteers on its Facebook page on Sunday, Nov. 22, along with a schedule of more training dates at 6 p.m. every other day. Volunteers



Jade McDowell/East Oregonian

**The Hermiston Warming Station will be located at The Arc of Umatilla County building in McKenzie Park for 2020.**

must attend a training, pass a background check and be at least 18 years old. They don't have to RSVP, just show up at 1075 S. Highway 395 in Hermiston at 6 p.m. on one of the dates listed.

"We understand that we are living in scary and trying times, but we cannot forget about the homeless in our community. They need us,"

the post stated. "Our mission is to compassionately provide a safe place to meet the basic human needs of those without shelter during the winter. Without volunteers, we just cannot make that happen. Please think about volunteering with us this season if you can. Many people depend on us to be successful."

### TO VOLUNTEER

For more information, visit the Hermiston Warming Station Facebook page or email [hws1075@gmail.com](mailto:hws1075@gmail.com).

The Hermiston Warming Station is usually located in a house on 1075 S. Highway 395, but this year is moving to The Arc of Umatilla County building at 215 W. Orchard Ave. in McKenzie Park. Francis said the larger space will allow the warming station to serve more people while maintaining 6 feet of social distancing. They will also have a separate sleeping room and restroom for those showing signs of illness or who have had recent contact with someone with COVID-19.

The warming station provides shelter to homeless individuals and others in need of temporary shelter each evening during the winter, usually from the end of November to the end of February. It opened for the season on Monday, Nov. 23, this year.

### LOCAL BRIEFING

#### Kiwanis Club selling Christmas trees

HERMISTON — Kiwanis Club of Hermiston begins its annual Christmas tree sale on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

The trees are available at the Hermiston Community Center parking lot, 415 S. Highway 395, on Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and the rest of the week from noon to 8 p.m.

The club has 400 trees available, and the sale will end when they are gone. Trees are Douglas firs, Grand firs and Noble firs from 5 to 8 feet tall, starting at \$30.

Proceeds benefit Kiwanis

Club projects, including supplies for foster children, youth scholarships, Doernbecher Children's Hospital, highway cleanups and more.

The club is also looking for more members, and those who join before the end of 2020 will have their new member fees waived.

#### Fundraiser replaces Festival of Trees for 2020

HERMISTON — Hermiston's annual Festival of Trees is canceled for 2020 due to COVID-19 concerns, but Kiwanis Club and the

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation still raised money for a good cause.

The two organizations usually put on the Festival of Trees at the Hermiston Community Center each year, auctioning off trees decorated by local businesses and other organizations and allowing families to visit the display of trees.

This year, Kiwanis and the health foundation solicited donations for the Hermiston Police Department's Christmas Express, which provides boxes of food and gifts for families in need. According to a news release from

John Spomer and Liz Marvin, the Festival of Trees co-chairs, they will donate about \$3,000 to Christmas Express "through the generous support of several businesses."

The Kiwanis Club is also going to virtually auction off a tree, which is on display downtown at Two-96Main, located at 296 Main St. A link to bid on the tree is here: [32auctions.com/kiwanischristmastree](https://32auctions.com/kiwanischristmastree).

"Without a doubt, the Hermiston Festival of Trees will return to be a significant part of the 2021 holiday season," Spomer and Marvin wrote.

— EO Media Group

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